

White House Reassesses Opposition To Ratifying Nuclear Test Treaty

By Walter Pincus

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David F. Emery, new deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, has pushed the White House into taking another look at ratifying the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty, after telling Congress last month that such an action would be "stabilizing and beneficial."

Up to now, the Reagan administration has opposed ratifying the U.S.-Soviet agreement, which limits underground nuclear weapons testing to devices of 150 kilotons or less, although both countries have said they would abide by its provisions.

At a March news conference, President Reagan said "we have reason to believe that there have been numerous violations" of the treaty. At that time, Reagan was trying to persuade the Soviets to renegotiate the agreement so as to permit on-site verification of tests, a proposal Moscow refused to discuss.

At his Senate confirmation hearings in May, Emery said ratification "would be in the best interest of our country."

While awaiting confirmation, Emery, an electrical engineer and former member of the House of Representatives, studied the ratification issue and visited California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, a nuclear weapons research facility where scientists have been analyzing the verification problem.

During his hearings, Emery said that "if we go ahead and ratify and then work to improve the verification... we will demonstrate that when the United States puts its good name on the line for a treaty of this significance, it can be counted on to follow through."

He added that there were ways to improve verification procedures, including "expanding the use of on-site seis-



DAVID F. EMERY

ACDA deputy calls pact beneficial mology, on-site verification" and forming a consultative commission "to regularly explore questions of mutual interest."

Based on his review, Emery said that "by far and away the great majority of [Soviet] detonations... have been in a range which leaves little or no doubt" that they were in "compliance" with the 1974 treaty.

As for the other tests, he said, "I am convinced there is no conclusive proof the Soviets have violated" the accord.

Emery also took issue with one of the

major complaints of treaty opponents—that the Soviets could benefit through treaty violations while U.S. adherence to the threshold would harm American weapons development.

"At the 150-kiloton level," Emery told the Senate committee, "we are relatively confident that no major scientific breakthrough can be denied us or given to the Soviet Union within the bounds of the verification abilities we now possess."

Emery was sworn in June 13 as the No. 2 official at ACDA, and was put in charge immediately of reviewing the verification issue and the military implications of violations of the 1974 treaty, according to agency sources.

Meanwhile, according to government sources, the National Security Council has established an interagency committee to review the administration's stand on the treaty.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is expected to hold hearings on the matter soon. The panel's chairman, Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), for two years has pressed for ratification of the treaty.

Arms control officials close to the situation say that the decision whether to submit the treaty to Congress for ratification will be a political rather than technical one.

Officials who support ratification say the administration will get more domestic and international political mileage from the treaty if it moves on its own to seek ratification than if it is pushed by Congress.

Treaty opponents, the officials say, base their opposition primarily on the argument that no agreement should be approved in which the Soviets could cheat and the United States could not be sure of catching them.